

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS
EASTERN DIVISION**

**HEATHER M. SNOW AND
ZACHARY S. SNOW,**

Plaintiffs,

v.

**THE PARTNERSHIPS AND
UNINCORPORATED ASSOCIATIONS
IDENTIFIED ON SCHEDULE A**

Defendants.

Civil Action No. 1:24-cv-02274

COMPLAINT

Plaintiffs Heather M. Snow and Zachary S. Snow (collectively “Plaintiffs”) hereby bring the present action against the Partnerships and Unincorporated Associations identified in Schedule A attached hereto (collectively, “Defendants”) and alleged as follows:

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

1. This Court has original subject matter jurisdiction over the claims in this action pursuant to the provisions of the Patent Act, 35 U.S.C. § 1, *et seq.*, 28 U.S.C. § 1338(a)-(b) and 28 U.S.C. § 1331.

2. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391, and this Court may properly exercise personal jurisdiction over Defendants since each of the Defendants directly targets business activities toward consumers in the United States, including Illinois, through at least the fully interactive, commercial Internet stores operating under the Online Marketplace Accounts identified in Schedule A attached hereto (collectively, the “Defendant Internet Stores”). Specifically, Defendants are reaching out to do business with Illinois residents by operating one or more commercial, interactive Defendant Internet Stores through which Illinois residents can

purchase products featuring Plaintiffs' patented system. Each of the Defendants has targeted sales from Illinois residents by operating online stores that offer shipping to the United States, including Illinois, accept payment in U.S. dollars and, on information and belief, has sold products featuring Plaintiff's patented design to residents of Illinois. Each of the Defendants is committing tortious acts in Illinois, is engaging in interstate commerce, and has wrongfully caused Plaintiffs substantial injury in the State of Illinois.

3. Joinder in this matter is proper under 35 U.S.C. § 299(a) as the Defendants are all offering for sale the same infringing product and this case will involve common questions of fact to all Defendants. Furthermore, Defendant Internet Stores share unique identifiers, such as using the same or substantially similar product images, same advertising, design elements and similarities of the infringing products offered for sale, establishing a logical relationship between them and suggesting that Defendants' operation arises out of the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or occurrences.

INTRODUCTION

4. This action has been filed by Plaintiffs to combat online infringers who trade upon Plaintiff's reputation and goodwill by selling and/or offering for sale unauthorized and unlicensed products, namely the rotary blade savers shown in **Exhibit 1**, that infringe Plaintiffs' patent (the "Infringing Products"). The Defendants create the Defendant Internet Stores and design them to appear to be selling genuine products, while actually selling Infringing Products to unknowing consumers. Defendants attempt to avoid liability by going to great lengths to conceal both their identities and the full scope and interworking of their operation. Plaintiffs are forced to file this action to combat Defendants' infringement of its patent, as well as to protect unknowing consumers from purchasing Infringing Products over the Internet. Plaintiffs have been and

continue to be irreparably damaged from the loss of its lawful patent rights to exclude others from making, using, selling, offering for sale, and importing its patented blade saver system as a result of Defendants' actions and seeks injunctive and monetary relief.

THE PARTIES

Plaintiffs Heather M. Snow and Zachary S. Snow

5. Plaintiffs Heather M. Snow and Zachary S. Snow ("Plaintiffs") are individuals that reside in California. Plaintiffs are the owner of a U.S. Patent, a true and correct copy of which is attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** (the "Patent").

6. Plaintiffs are the owner of all right, title and interest in the Patent, including all rights to enforce and prosecute actions for infringement and to collect damages for all relevant times against infringers of the Patent. Accordingly, Plaintiffs possess the exclusive right and standing to prosecute the present action for infringement of the Patent by Defendant.

7. Plaintiffs offer for sale a product covered by the patent via online retailers such as its own website, which practice the Patent. Plaintiffs have established their products as the first to market, protected by patent, and has an established reputation and quality reviews.

8. Plaintiffs' product is well received by customers who desire a novel and efficient tool to reuse old rotary blades that allows for their used rotary blades to be safely used.

9. Plaintiffs have not granted a license or any other form of permission to Defendants with respect to the Patent.

The Defendants

10. Defendants are individuals and business entities who, upon information and belief, reside in the People's Republic of China and elsewhere outside of the United States. Defendants conduct business throughout the United States, including within the State of Illinois and this Judicial District, through the operation of the fully interactive, commercial online marketplaces

operating under the Defendant Internet Stores. Each Defendant targets the United States, including Illinois, and has offered to sell, ready to ship, and, on information and belief, has sold and continues to sell Infringing Products to consumers within the United States, including the State of Illinois.

11. On information and belief, Defendants are an interrelated group of infringers working in active concert to knowingly and willfully make, use, offer for sale, sell, and/or import into the United States for subsequent sale or use products that infringe directly and/or indirectly the Patent in the same transaction, occurrence, or series of transactions or occurrences. For example, Defendants all sell and/or offer for sale the same infringing products with minor variations as well as similar if not identical product images and descriptions as shown in the Exhibit. Tactics used by Defendants to conceal their identities and the full scope of their operation make it virtually impossible for Plaintiffs to learn Defendants' true identities and the exact interworking of their network. If Defendants provide additional credible information regarding their identities, Plaintiffs will take appropriate steps to amend the Complaint.

12. Plaintiffs have not licensed or authorized Defendants to use the invention claimed in the Patent, and none of the Defendants are authorized retailers of Plaintiffs' Products.

13. Defendants go to great lengths to conceal their identities and often use multiple fictitious names and addresses to register and operate their network of Defendant Internet Stores. On information and belief, Defendants regularly create new online marketplace accounts on various platforms, as well as other unknown fictitious names and addresses. Such Defendant Internet Store registration patterns are one of many common tactics used by the Defendants to conceal their identities, the full scope and interworking of their operation, and to avoid being shut down.

14. Even though Defendants operate under multiple fictitious names, there are numerous similarities among the Defendant Internet Stores. The Defendant Internet Stores include notable common features beyond selling the same infringing products, including the same product images, lack of reliable contact information, and the use of the same or substantially similar text, images, product descriptions, some even including content copied from Plaintiffs' original product listings.

15. In addition to operating under multiple fictitious names, Defendants in this case and defendants in other similar cases against online infringers use a variety of other common tactics to evade enforcement efforts. For example, infringers like Defendants will often register new online marketplace accounts under new aliases once they receive notice of a lawsuit. Infringers also typically ship products in small quantities via international mail to minimize detection by U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

16. Further, infringers such as Defendants typically operate multiple credit card merchant accounts behind layers of payment gateways so that they can continue operation in spite of Plaintiffs' enforcement efforts, such as take down notices. On information and belief, Defendants maintain off-shore bank accounts and regularly move funds from their online marketplace accounts or other financial accounts to off-shore bank accounts outside the jurisdiction of this Court. Indeed, analysis of transaction histories from previous similar cases indicates that offshore infringers regularly move funds from U.S.-based accounts to China-based bank accounts outside the jurisdiction of this Court.

17. Defendants, without any authorization or license from Plaintiffs, have knowingly and willfully offered for sale, sold, and/or imported into the United States for subsequent resale or use products that infringe directly and/or indirectly the Patent, and continue to do so via the

Defendant Internet Stores. Each Defendant Internet Store offers shipping to the United States, including Illinois, and, on information and belief, each Defendant has sold Infringing Products into the United States, including Illinois.

18. Defendants' infringement of the Patent in the offering to sell, selling, or importing of the Infringing Products was willful.

19. Defendants' infringement of the Patent in connection with the offering to sell, selling, or importing of the Infringing Products, including the offering for sale and sale of Infringing Products into Illinois, is irreparably harming Plaintiffs.

COUNT I
INFRINGEMENT OF UNITED STATES PATENT
(35 U.S.C. § 271)

20. Plaintiffs hereby re-allege and incorporate by reference the allegations set forth in the preceding paragraphs.

21. Defendants offer for sale, sell, and/or import into the United States for subsequent resale or use Infringing Products that infringe directly and/or indirectly the system claimed in the Patent. Infringement by the Infringing Products is demonstrated by the claim chart in **Exhibit 3**.

22. Defendants have infringed the Patent through the aforesaid acts and will continue to do so unless enjoined by this Court. Defendants' wrongful conduct has caused Plaintiffs to suffer irreparable harm resulting from the loss of their lawful patent rights to exclude others from making, using, selling, offering for sale, and importing the patented inventions. Plaintiffs are entitled to injunctive relief pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 283.

23. Unless a preliminary and permanent injunction is issued enjoining Defendants and all others acting in active concert therewith from infringing the Patent, Plaintiffs will be greatly and irreparably harmed.

24. Plaintiffs are entitled to recover damages adequate to compensate for the infringement, including Defendants' profits pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 289. Plaintiffs are entitled to recover any other damages as appropriate pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 284.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs pray for a judgment against Defendants as follows:

1) That Defendants, their affiliates, officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, confederates, and all persons acting for, with, by, through, under or in active concert with them be temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently enjoined and restrained from:

- a. offering for sale, selling, and importing any products not authorized by Plaintiffs and that include any reproduction, copy or colorable imitation of the design claimed in the Patent;
- b. aiding, abetting, contributing to, or otherwise assisting anyone in infringing upon the Patent; and
- c. effecting assignments or transfers, forming new entities or associations or utilizing any other device for the purpose of circumventing or otherwise avoiding the prohibitions set forth in Subparagraphs (a) and (b).

2) Entry of an Order that, upon Plaintiffs' request, those in privity with Defendants and those with notice of the injunction, including, without limitation, any online marketplace platforms such as eBay, AliExpress, Alibaba, Amazon, Wish.com, Walmart.com, Temu and Dhgate, web hosts, sponsored search engine or ad-word providers, credit cards, banks, merchant account providers, third party processors and other payment processing service providers, Internet search engines such as Google, Bing and Yahoo (collectively, the "Third Party Providers") shall:

- a. disable and cease providing services being used by Defendants, currently or in the future, to engage in the sale of goods that infringe the Patent;
 - b. disable and cease displaying any advertisements used by or associated with Defendants in connection with the sale of infringing goods using the patented design; and
 - c. take all steps necessary to prevent links to the Defendant Internet Stores identified on Schedule A from displaying in search results, including, but not limited to, removing links to the Defendant Internet Stores from any search index;
- 3) That Plaintiffs be awarded such damages as it shall prove at trial against Defendants that are adequate to compensate Plaintiffs for infringement of the Patent, and all of the profits realized by Defendants, or others acting in concert or participation with Defendants, from Defendants' unauthorized use and infringement of the Patent;
- 4) That Plaintiffs be awarded from Defendants, as a result of Defendants' use and infringement of the Patent, three times Plaintiff's therefrom and three times Defendants' profits therefrom, after an accounting, pursuant to 35 USC § 284;
- 5) That Plaintiffs be awarded its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs; and
- 6) Award any and all other relief that this Court deems just and proper.

DATED March 20, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

By: /s/ Steven G. Kalberg

David R. Bennett

Steven G. Kalberg

DIRECTION IP LAW

P.O. Box 14184

Chicago, Illinois 60614

Tel: (312) 291-1667

dbennett@directionip.com

skalberg@directionip.com

Counsel for Plaintiffs

Heather M. Snow and

Zachary S. Snow